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This bulletin is one in a series to provide information to taxpayers with information that may be of assistance during the 2012 tax filing season.

Filing Your Income Tax Returns: Free Resources Available to You

“Fast” and “easy” are not words you might associate when filing your taxes or applying for a refund. However, times and taxes have changed. Filing your taxes can be just a mouse click away and you may even qualify for free assistance as well.

You can file your return electronically using secure, state-of-the-art software. Nearly all personal income tax filers can e-file their federal and state returns, although some features differ.

Free file your federal taxes online

Free File is a free service that offers federal income tax preparation and e-file for taxpayers with income of \$57,000 or less. The software provides step-by-step guidance, making it easy for you to complete your return. With Free File, the commonly used IRS tax forms (1040 and 1040A) and schedules (earned income credit and itemized deductions) are available. To get started go to www.freefile.irs.gov.

California e-file is free

For your California tax return, there is [ReadyReturn](#) and [CalFile](#). ReadyReturn is a pre-fill California tax return that includes your W-2 earnings and other information from your last year's tax return. A ReadyReturn could be waiting for your approval if you had one employer, your filing status is single or head of household, and you use the standard deduction.

CalFile is available for most Californians with income from wages, interest, retirement, and social security benefits. You may claim the standard deduction or itemized deductions and benefit from the various exemptions and credits. Once you have your federal tax return completed, it is easy to utilize CalFile.

There are several other [online filing options](#) available for completing your state tax return. However, some of these services may have a cost.

Volunteer Income Tax Assistance

If you would like assistance in filing your federal and California tax return, there is free help available through [Volunteer Income Tax Assistance \(VITA\)](#). VITA provides free tax return preparation and e-file for those with income of \$50,000 or less. This free service includes information about the earned income tax credit, child tax credit, and credit for the elderly. Locate a VITA site in your neighborhood [here](#).